



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1898-01-03

Letter from John Muir to [Charles Sprague] Sargent, 1898 Jan 3.

John Muir

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Martinez, Jan. 3. 1898.

My dear Sargent.

I thank you for your
kind wishes for the new year &
send you my best in return, con-
gratulating you on the recovery of your
daughter the healing of your broken
ankle & on our good reviving Alaska trip.
Of course I'm sorry to hear the doom
of good park-loving-flower-loving
forest-loving Forest & Garden, but we
must just turn our love into other
channels. I am now pecking away
at a description of the Yellowstone
Park looking in as I can perceive
of the military management as compared
with political. Next I will take up
the Yosemite Park, & then the Sequoia
This will make five forest articles for
the Atlantic which Haughton Mifflin is to

bring out as a ²book. The whole leafy
thing being due to you.
After Johnson got home he wrote that
The Century Co. would like to bring out these
Forest articles in book form & when
I replied that Wroughton Mifflin had
the promise of them & also of an
Alaska book he wrote a six page
letter of lamentation. - enough to make
a fellow conceited. I told him I
did not write enough to make a fuss
about.

What are we to do about Forest matters?
The sky looks mighty black & blue
and I have no plan system or trick
to save them. You must know far better
than me what is best to be done.
I mean simply to go on hammering
& thumping as best I can at public
opinion hoping & praying in the meantime
that we may get soon a President Dec of the
Interior & Land Agent that can trees & will try

to save them.

Here is something from Pinchot which, had it come from a duper fountain would have lighted the gloom. He says in a letter to me dated Dec. 15, "Except for certain administrative clouds which darken the horizon, the general prospect for the forests seems never to have been ~~brighter~~ so bright as now. I am not only confident of maintaining the present Reserves, but full of hope that we shall be able, not only to protect them in the near future, but to increase their area to a notable extent." "Two alternatives" he says "present themselves for the treatment of the reserved public timber lands. One is to reserve all such lands at one blow by refusing to allow any forest lands of the U. S. to be disposed of hereafter. This course would probably require Congressional action, & it is by no means certain that such action could be obtained. The other course is to

secure the reservation of considerable bodies
not now reserved, so as to include, as far as
possible, all mountain ranges & any other
considerable bodies of Government timber land
which may exist. I shall recommend
the general withdrawal of all lands as the best
plan, but if it is out of reach, I wish to be in a
position to describe accurately such large
bodies of Government forests, that with good
will on the part of the President, we could
secure essentially the same result. Of course,
we can be said to have secured nothing so far
except the chance to fight, but even that
is a great thing". Draw what comfort
you can from this. For my part
I find nothing at all in it that is
dependable. He says further. "I learned
yesterday (Dec 14) that my direct connection with the
Interior Department may terminate with this year".
Draw what comfort you can from this. To me it
seems all fog & mush. When shall we meet again?
What do you say to a trip through the interior of Alaska
next summer. Will see Miggins & Patton, & even Allen
by the time your glorious Silva is done I will be
ready for most anything sylvan. Ever Yours John Muir